

Council – 7th November 2011

Portfolio holder brief – Social care and health - Councillor McCracken

The Social Care and Inclusion directorate has seen further significant change and development during the last year. It has demonstrably improved outcomes for vulnerable adults and older people in the borough, meeting demographic and financial challenges, while delivering substantial cost savings.

This continuing transformation has used good programme and project management to ensure efficient processes and best use of resources to optimise results for users of services. The Executive Director of Social Care has continued to invest time and effort to engage personally with individual citizens and groups, seeking feedback on the services provided and consulting on proposals for future developments.

The Directorate's restructure has now been completed. The arrangement and working practices of all divisions now reflects the citizen's journey as expressed in the new adult social care operating model: from self help and self service through information, advice and signposting, to – where needed – assessment and the allocation of a personal budget with regular review. The whole model focuses on opportunities to prevent dependence and deterioration through enablement and re-ablement. A comprehensive training programme for front line staff in new ways of working promotes a partnership of equals between social care staff and citizens, recognising that it is the service user who is usually best placed to determine what their needs are and how these can best be met.

The contact centre provides information, advice and signposting to sources of help, assisting people to find their own solutions without the need for state support or intervention. The "Help in the Community" web pages – and other formats - provide rich detail on a wide range of services available in local communities.

A focus on the use of assistive technology has been maintained, adding to existing tele-care services through tele-health monitoring in a joint initiative with the local NHS – one of many initiatives to reduce unplanned hospital admissions and to shorten hospital stays. A new Independent Living Centre providing equipment and advice has been developed at the new Tesco building in Walsall town centre.

Adult social care services now work to the assumption that no younger adult with a physical or learning disability or experiencing mental health problems should be placed in long term residential or nursing care, and that their position and prospects are improved through opportunities for living with support within their own community. In partnership with the NHS the re-provision of campus accommodation for adults with a profound learning disability has been completed.

A major and continuing exercise is bringing people placed in long term residential and nursing homes outside Walsall – in some cases hundreds of miles away – back to the borough, to residential or supported living arrangements tailored to their individual needs. This enables them to again be part of their local community, and it also promotes the local economy, with services for Walsall people being delivered in Walsall, by Walsall people. The directorate's own buildings-based provision now focuses on re-ablement and respite care.

The past year has seen a significant initiative in employment opportunities for adults with disabilities, with over 50 placements made and continuing development of a range of opportunities for younger adults, including those with autism, to taste and experience the world of work.

A major focus has been and continues to be on driving up the quality of commissioned services in the borough: domiciliary care, residential and nursing home care. This has long been an area needing development and we are working closely with the Care Quality Commission to deliver results that give vulnerable adults and older people the protection, dignity, respect, quality of life and choices to which they are entitled and which they rightly expect to receive.

Following extensive consultation a benefits based charging system has been introduced for adult social care services. This is increasing income, thereby protecting front line services through continuity and new investment, while at the same time ensuring that every service user is receiving their full welfare benefits entitlement and has the ability to pay for their services.

Very positive engagement and partnership working has continued with all parts of the National Health Service locally during the passage through parliament of the Health and Social Care bill. There has also been robust forward planning to ensure continuing good governance and effective services and partnership when the new legislation and working arrangements are finalised and come into effect.

The remit of the Joint Commissioning Unit has expanded to include the commissioning of many local health services. As individual service users take control of their own services through personal budgets, the JCU's role in relation to adult social care is increasingly moving towards shaping, stimulating and developing markets in the private, voluntary and community sectors, rather than directly contracting and buying services.

The directorate has continued to foster positive and close working relationships with carers and with the local third sector – seeking in particular to develop their role in the market for social care services and in community development. There has also been good engagement with the new area partnerships, with a named senior manager from social care and inclusion linking to each of the area managers.

IN CONCLUSION

The Social Care and Inclusion Directorate has continued to improve the lives of vulnerable adults and older people in Walsall, developing new approaches and new cost effective services, while improving value for money.

27th October 2011